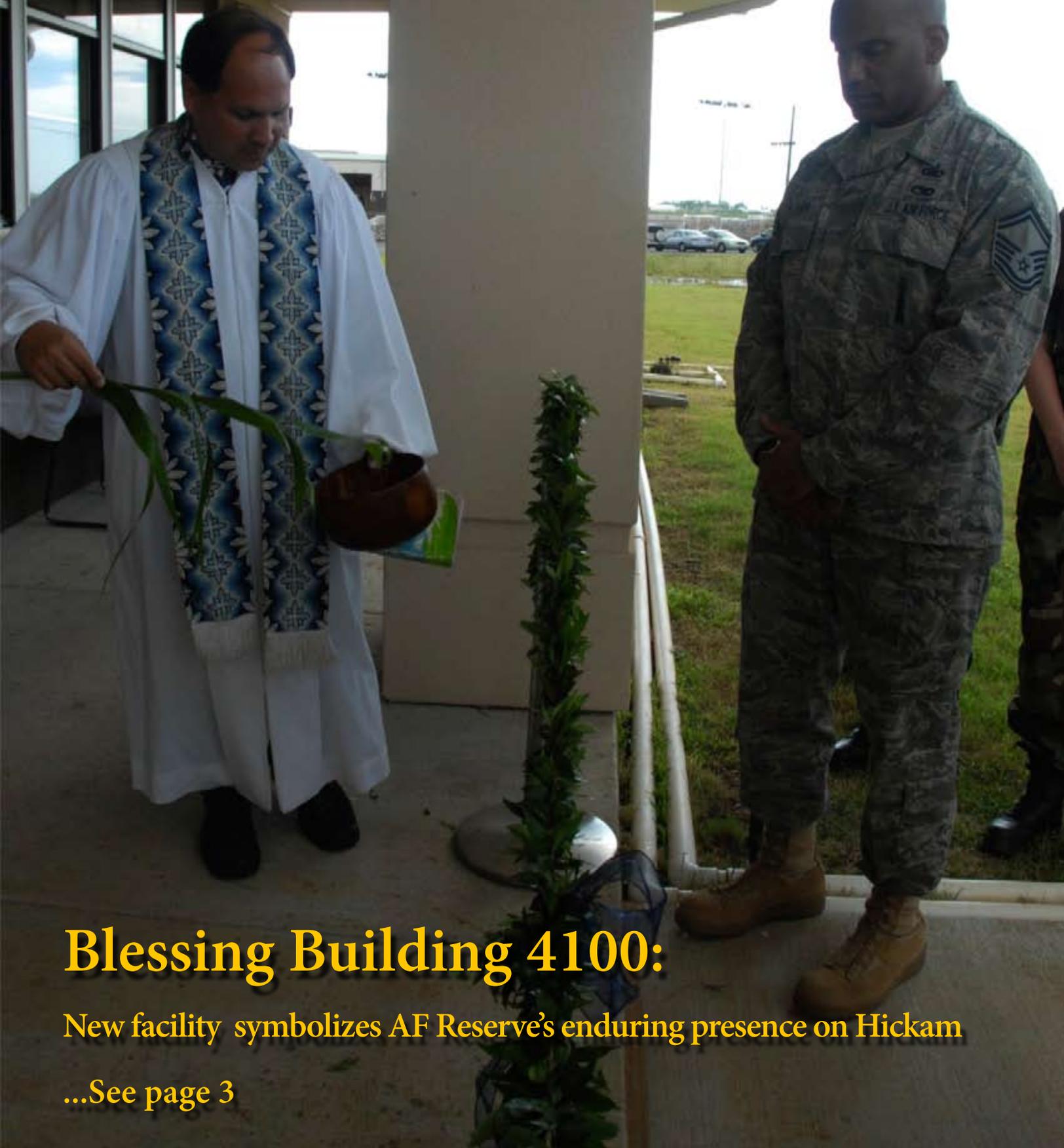


Pacific Crossings

January 2009

The Official Newsletter of the 624th Regional Support Group



Blessing Building 4100:

New facility symbolizes AF Reserve's enduring presence on Hickam

...See page 3



Weathering the storm together

(Photo by Lance Cheung)

by *Chief Master Sgt. Rodney J. McKinley*
Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force

Our Air Force's number three priority is "Develop and care for Airmen and their families." This isn't a catch-phrase our senior leadership developed, it is true - we care about you.

Throughout my career, a core principle of our Air Force leadership has always remained true - we take care of Airmen and their families.

At every level of leadership, from first-line supervisors, to first sergeants, chiefs and commanders, to the Secretary of the Air Force, we are committed to doing what's right for our Airmen and their loved ones.

I know there are many issues causing us stress today. We are a nation fighting a war on two fronts.

Many Airmen are in a tough deployment schedule. Others remaining at home station may be swamped from picking up the extra workload of the deployed Airmen.

Our nation is in the midst of the biggest financial crisis seen in a long while. Some Airmen are being hit hard in their investments or by fluctuations in the housing market. Many more may struggle to pay their bills or from the strain of higher day-to-day living expenses.

I know there are Airmen who battle seemingly desperate situations. Sometimes Airmen or their family members feel legal, relationship, financial or medical burdens are insurmountable and beyond bearing - but they are not.

Recently we have experienced an increase in the number of suicides within our Air Force family. These are terrible, tragic losses - not only for the Air Force, but also for the family left behind, their friends, peers and wingmen.

This hurts us all deeply; right to the core. We want you to know; no matter the trouble or how hopeless the situation may seem, there is always someone who can help... someone you can turn to. Every Airman matters, regardless of where you are stationed, or whether you are active duty, guard, reserve, or civilian - you are part of our Air Force family.

So many people care about you - more than you know; family, friends, co-workers, supervisors, first sergeants, chaplains, medical professionals and senior leaders are ready and willing to listen and help. Just give them a chance. If you are feeling overwhelmed by circumstances in your life, share your burdens with those who care greatly about you. There is always someone who will be there for you.

Don't ever think you are alone or that no one will understand. We will understand and we will help you. It doesn't matter whether you write, call, or e-mail, please reach out. We are an Air Force family and you mean a lot to all of us.

If you feel you are at the end of your road, you are not - call me. I care about you and I will ensure you receive the help you need.

Pacific Crossings

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Action Line

The Action line is your direct line to the 624th Regional Support Group Commander. If you have worked through normal channels and are not satisfied with the answer, the Action Line is your opportunity to ask questions or make suggestions about the subjects of concern to the 624th RSG community.

You may contact the action line at jennifer.chamberlin@us.af.mil.

Please include your name and phone number in case additional information is required. Action lines of general interest will be published in Pacific Crossings, and others will be answered by phone.

On the Cover

Senior Master Sgt. Bob Prather watches as Kahu Kordell Kekoa, a pastor from Kamehameha Schools in Honolulu, Hawaii, blesses the opening of building 4100, the 624th Regional Support Group's new facility. Full story on page 3.

(Photo by
Staff Sgt. Jennie Chamberlin)



Kahu Kordell Kekoa, a chaplain from Kamehameha Schools in Honolulu, directs Senior Master Sgts. Ricarte Tadeo, Corina Seitz and Bob Prather, 624th Regional Support Group, to untie a maile lei as part of a Hawaiian blessing ceremony commemorating the opening of a new building for the 624th Regional Support Group December 7, 2008 at Hickam Air Force Base, Hawaii. The building represents the first structure built on the base specifically for the 624th RSG. (Photo by Staff Sgt. Jennie Chamberlin)

624th RSG celebrates opening of new facility

*By Staff Sgt. Jennifer Chamberlin
624th RSG Public Affairs*

More than 60 members of 624th Regional Support Group celebrated the opening of a new facility in a ceremony December 7 at Hickam Air Force Base, Hawaii.

The new building 4100 is the first building specifically built for the 624th RSG and will house the 624th Aeromedical Staging Squadron, the 624th Directorate of Personnel Management and other members of the 624th RSG staff.

Kahu Kordell Kekoa, a pastor at Kamehameha Schools in Honolulu, performed a traditional Hawaiian blessing over the new facility.

Using the symbolic tools of water, a branch from a ti plant, and Hawaiian sea salt from the island of Kauai, Kekoa blessed the four corners and the doorways of the new building.

"In the Hawaiian way of thinking, everything has a spirit, including buildings, C-17s, and F-22s," Kekoa said. "We

want to make sure the place is spiritually cleaned out and ready to do business."

For Master Sgt. Josephine Taitague, 624th DPM, ready to do business in the new building means a bigger and more productive workspace.

"It's very homey," Sergeant Taitague said of her new office. Her old office barely allowed room for two people and had no testing facility, she said. Now Sergeant Taitague has a space that allows her to offer consultations in a comfortable setting or test several people at once.

For Major Tina Smith, 624th DPM, the building not only symbolizes an expansion of office space, but also an expansion of the 624th RSG.

"Having a building on base serves as a symbol of our presence on base to all who pass it," she said. "It lets us fit our surroundings, and it's a start to building up the organization."

Honoring Hickam's Heroes

By Capt. Kathy Izon
48th Aerial Port Squadron

While working at the 15th Airlift Wing Historian Office this November, I was excited to learn I would have the opportunity to meet with some of the survivors of the World War II attack on Hickam Field. The Wing Commander held a Holiday Reception for the visiting veterans on Saturday, Dec 6, 2008 at the Officers' Club. The history office contributed a static Historical Photo exhibit and a DVD production that featured photos of Hickam Field during the late 1930s to 1940s prior to Dec 7, 1941.

I volunteered to assist the Wing Protocol Officer, Peter Cruz, and Barbara Coghlin, who was instrumental in starting the Hickam History Club and bringing the history back "home" -- she researched, collected, and compiled a treasure fold of information on WWII survivors for several years. Arrangements were made to meet and greet the veterans and family members at the airport, providing them with gift baskets and a hug... All of these individuals attended the Dec 6 reception. I gave each of the veterans and family of veterans a copy of the special DVD as a gift from the Wing.

We met Senior Master Sgt. (ret) Lou Roffman, who was at Luke Field then moved to Hickam just prior to World War II. Back in the day, he was a B-17 Bomber Crew Chief, Flight Engineer, 31st Bombardment. Today his jokes and magic made everyone around him laugh and smile. While on the tour through PACAF, he performed his magic on Maj Gen Hostage when he made the general's coin (presented to Lou) disappear. "I almost got another one!" he told me. Someone commented on how his down to earth attitude must have helped him keep going. He was in the consolidated barracks (now the PACAF Headquarters Building) when they were hit by the Japanese.

He told me about how he ran out to his B-17 aircraft along hangar row when a Japanese Zero came low and blasted out the 3rd engine setting it on fire; he jumped out, surviving that attack. The next day he was on one of only two B-17 aircraft that got airborne.

Tech. Sgt. Max Baker was another survivor who served at Hickam Field, originally with the 72nd on Dec 7, quickly transferred to the 31st Bombardment and was in J Wing when they were attacked. I recall him saying he was in bed and suddenly there was a loud blast two beds from him, debris and glass flying. His only possessions left after that attack were a pair of socks and a Bible his grandmother gave him. The Bible is now displayed at PACAF in the Hospitality Room. He donated his personal affects to the Wing, including his military uniform issued to him in September 1944, his mess kit and cup from 1942, and a wooden war club and comb when he served at Guadalcanal 1943, which is displayed at the 15th Air Wing Historian Office wall case.

I met Judy Meehan Mead, whose father was a pilot and Commander of 72nd Squadron and 5th Bombardment Group. Judy lived here at Hickam Field on Dec 7 and during the Hickam tour we passed by where she used to live. Her father was in Australia and was lost on a mission to Rabaul, New Ireland, North Solomons. JPAC was able to provide her more information on her father and to give her hope that one day he will be found.

Other veterans were:

1. Col. Hugh Mahoney, who was a B-17, B29 Navigator, assigned to the 23rd then the 42nd Squadron.

2. The Shepherd daughters, Pat Smith and Vonnie Cisar whose father, Marion Shepherd, was a B-17 Navigator with the 31st Bombardment.

3. Sylvia Phillip's husband, Claude Phillips, was in single officer quar-

ters with his roommate, Jim Karstein when the consolidated barracks was hit. He wanted to eat breakfast but because Jim would not wake up, it actually saved their lives! He received a silver star for shooting some Japanese zeroes, and was successful in taking reconnaissance photos of Wake Island that would help the war effort.

4. Lt. Col. Dan Jones belonged to the 4th Reconnaissance on Dec 7. He told me his story about how he took a walk on the morning of Dec 7 towards Base Ops and spotted an aircraft formation, and when one peeled off he saw the red circles on the wings. He pulled out his 45 and began firing at the aircraft.

5. Joyce Irwin, whose father Maj Charles W. Irwin, was here in 1940, a pilot with the 11th Bombardment. He had just finished breakfast at the consolidated barracks when the attack occurred. He quickly threw himself into a ditch until it was safe. He was one of the first groups of pilots to back up after the Japanese.

Other family members were Cecilia Powell, daughter and Major Neal, grandson of Antonio Cobo of the Headquarters Squadron and Lt Jenna Raunig (Navy), granddaughter of Private Zigmnum Balamut.

I also met the 31st Bombardment Group Historian, Joanne Emerick, whose father came to Hickam in 1942 as a medic with the 31st, and gave a historic presentation to the veterans and their families.

The stories the veterans told this weekend touched the hearts of all who were there. Some cried, some laughed, some were quiet. They are the heroes of the day, December 7, and will always be remembered for their valiant service and dedication to protecting the American way of life. It was a chance in a lifetime to meet them.

Feature

Capt. Kathy Izon, 48th Aerial Port Squadron, shares a moment with retired Senior Master Sgt. Lou Roffman, a survivor of the attack on Hickam Field by the Japanese on Dec. 7, 1941. Sergeant Roffman also participated the Battle of Midway.

(Photo by Master Sgt. Daniel Nathaniel)



Comply or ...

*By Master Sgt. Steve Adachi
624th RSG Safety Office*

Traffic accidents continue to be the leading cause of premature deaths for people in the armed forces, and for all Americans.

Some of the factors in these mishaps included speeding and not using seatbelts or helmets.

“Seat belts are the single most effective safety device,” said Elaine Weinstein, director of safety recommendations at the National Transportation Safety Board. When used properly, seat belts reduce the risk of fatal injury by 45 percent. Best of all Weinstein added, “It doesn’t cost anything.”

Hawaii Revised Statutes (HRS) 291-11.6, which requires no person shall operate a motor vehicle unless the person operating the vehicle and all passengers are properly restrained by an occupant restraint system (seat belt).

Penalty for not wearing a seatbelt is a mandatory 92 dollar fine. Guam has a similar law which enforces seat belt use as a primary means of traffic citation, 70 dollar fine.

In accordance with Air Force Instruction 91-207 3.4.1.1, all persons listed in paragraph 1.1.1. operating or riding in motor vehicles, shall wear installed safety belts as prescribed by the manufacturer.

Individuals shall not ride in seating positions where safety belts have not been installed, have been removed or have been rendered inoperative.

Active duty or military members on orders may lose their driving privileges for one year. Civilians will be cited a 75 dollar fine and the violation will be submitted to the district court.

Awhile back, the 624 Regional Support Group Safety conducted a seat

belt spot check on vehicles arriving for the physical fitness test.

The conditions at the time were less than ideal. It was raining and the sun was just rising, therefore the roads were slick and the visibility poor.

Of the 74 occupants observed, 17 were not in-compliance.

To the members of our unit who attempt to exercise their own personal judgment concerning their or their occupant’s personal safety, buckle-up already.

It has been over five years since Hawaii and Guam have adopted the mandatory primary seat belt law. This means that an officer can pull drivers over just because you are not wearing a seat belt.

If you are driving on-base without a seat belt know this - you could lose a lot more than just your base driving privileges, you could get seriously injured or killed.

To sum it up;

1. You are more likely to die in a motor vehicle accident than by any other means of tragedy.
2. Seatbelt usage reduces the risk of fatal injury by 45 percent.
3. State and Territorial laws enforce a significant fine if you or one of your occupants is not wearing a seatbelt.
4. Hickam Air Force Base imposes penalties on violators to include monetary loss and/or loss of base driving privileges.
5. Nearly 25 percent of RSG personnel were observed arriving at Fit to Fight without seat belts.

So when it comes to seatbelts “Comply or You May Die – Buckle Your Seat Belt Already.”



Spreading holiday cheer

During the holiday season, members of the 44th Aerial Port Squadron, Andersen Air Force Bases, Guam, volunteered their time entertaining the residents of St. Dominics, a senior care facility, in Barrigada, Guam.

Above - Capt. Patrick Lujan, Chief Master Sgt. Mary Aguon, Senior Master Sgt. Edith Mesa and Mr. Mesa (w/guitar), Master Sgt. Joseph I. Cruz, Master Sgt. Ramon Peredo.

Left - Senior Master Sgt. Kenneth Lujan makes a presentation.

(44th APS courtesy photos)



Semper Fi & Aim High

In 1977, desiring to see the world and serve his country, Abe Mangrubang enlisted into the United States Marine Corps as an avionics repairman. His journey in the Corps would take him from San Diego to Kaneohe Bay with ship-board tours on the USS Tarawa and New Orleans. In 1989, separating from active duty as a Gunnery Sergeant, he still desired to serve and tried enlistments in both the U.S. Naval Reserve and Hawaii Air National Guard before finding a home with the Air Force Reserve in 1990. In 2003, Sergeant Mangrubang became the First Sergeant for the now inactivated 624th Maintenance Operation Flight and then later with the 624th Aeromedical Staging Squadron. While Sergeant Mangrubang recognizes the impact he had on the careers of numerous young Airmen, it is they who have impacted his life in more ways than he can express, he said. Sergeant Mangrubang retired on Dec. 23, 2008, in a ceremony held at the Courtyard of Heroes, Pacific Air Forces Headquarters, Hickam Air Force Base, Hawaii.

From left - Joshua-Brandon, son; Pauline, wife; Cara, granddaughter; Master Sgt. Abe Mangrubang; Lance Cpl. Abe Mangrubang Jr, son; Cora, daughter-in-law. (Photo by Vanessa Perez)

UTA Schedule

Hickam

January 10-11
February 7-8
March 7-8
April 4-5

Andersen

January 17-18
February 21-22
March 21-22
April 18-19



*By Master Sgt. Leony Macapagal
48th Aerial Port Squadron
First Sergeant*

Always adhere to standards of neatness, cleanliness, safety and military image while in uniform. All Airmen will procure and maintain all mandatory clothing; request a civilian clothing allowance if required to wear civilian clothes; and purchase items from the military clothing sales stores or commercial vendors.